

The Art of Staying Organized

Organization is essential to keeping any office running smoothly. But let's face it, being organized isn't always easy.



For one thing, most of us are constantly multi-tasking. We send memos, write letters, order supplies, answer phones and emails, open mail, manage special projects and keep files filed – not to mention responding to countless requests from people around us each and every day.

It's estimated that each office employee spends one hour a day searching for a document or misfiled folder! That means an astonishing six weeks every year is devoted to looking for something.

With that in mind, we've gathered some useful tips for perfecting and maintaining your organizational skills.

Jan Jasper, author of *Take Back Your Time: How to Regain Control of Work, Information and Technology* (St. Martin's Press), recommends that you not worry about having a totally clean desk. A super-cleaned-off desk, Jan advises, "is impossible to maintain since every day your desk attracts more paper. Managing that paper can best be accomplished by having 'action' files within your reach. Keep them in an easily accessible drawer or even on top of your desk.

"Action files contain things you're working on – one might be labeled 'current projects,' another 'staff meeting,' or 'order office supplies.' Each contains ongoing projects." Here are a few more tips:

Shared Files.

Files you share with others can have the habit of "disappearing!" Do this: Next to your filing cabinet keep a stack of empty files that are labeled "signed-out." Encourage anyone who removes a file to replace it with a "signed-out" file on which they write their name and the date. If you're hunting for a particular file,

you'll know who removed it and when.

Organize your email.

Email can be organized by category into folders just like computer files. Delete emails you don't need to save as soon as you've read them.

Prioritize.

To keep projects running smoothly, develop a "priority" system of files. Labeling files whose contents must be dealt with "today" and "this week" and "this month" will help you keep your projects on track.

Tickler Files.

Those "old fashioned" tickler files still work for remembering odd tasks that need to happen during the year. Check each month's file folder for tasks you don't want to forget.

Remember that remaining organized through it all requires an act of will, but the rewards reaped for both you and your company can be enormous.

For help with stress management or other personal issues, call Employee Support Systems Company, your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at (800) 221-0945. We're here for you and your family 24-hours a day, 7-days week.